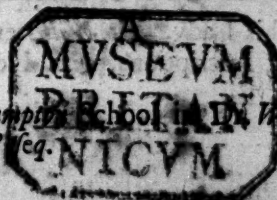


Some Account of BROWNE WILLIS, Esq; L.L.D.
late Senior Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries
of London.

By Dr. DUCAREL, F. S. A.

BROWNE WILLIS, Esq; L. L. D. was born Sept. 14, 1682, at St. Mary, Blandford, Co. Dorset. — He was Grandson of Dr. *Thomas Willis*, the most celebrated Physician of his Time, and the eldest Son of *Thomas Willis*, Esq; of *Bletchley*, in the County of *Bucks*. His Mother was *Alice*, Daughter of *Robert Browne*, Esq; of *Frampton*, in *Dorsetshire*. — Mr. *Willis* was three or four Years under the Care of Mr. *Abraham Freestone*, at *Bechampton School*; after that he was sent to *Westminster School*. The neighbouring Abbey drew his Admiration, here he loved to walk and contemplate; The Solemnity of the Building, the antique Appearance, the Monuments filled his whole Mind, he delighted himself in reading old Inscriptions; here he first imbibed the Love of Antiquities, and the Impression grew indelible. His Father's Death, which was followed in less than three Months by the Death of his Mother, gave him inexpressible Affliction, and brought on the Falling Sickness, and that, for many Years, to such a Degree as would have entirely disqualified any other Person from any Studies at all. This shews the Excellency of his Parts, and his wonderful Industry, that under such Disadvantages he should apply himself so closely as he did to the most laborious Researches. At the Age of Seventeen he was admitted a Gentleman Commoner of *Christ Church College*,

* See an Account of *Bechampton School* in Dr. *Willis's History of the Hundred of Buckingham*, p. 137, & seq.



College, Oxon, under the Tuition of the famous Geographer *Edward Wells*, D. D. He continued there Four Years, during which Time he became intimately acquainted with *Mr. William Adams*, a Student of that College, a Man of uncommon Parts and Learning, in whose Conversation therefore he could not fail to improve; and who, moreover, in the early Part of Life, made it his Business to introduce him into the most polite Company in the University: And for so valuable a Friend he ever after retained the greatest Regard and Esteem. Here, likewise, he first contracted a firm Friendship with the learned *Dr. Richard Frewin*, that great Ornament of the University and his own Profession; which Friendship subsisted uninterruptedly during the great Number of Years to which they both attained: *Dr. Frewin* being always pleased with the Reputation his Friend afterwards arrived at, in his Researches as an Antiquary, and *Mr. Willis*, alternately obliged, by *Dr. Frewin's* Readiness to assist him in any Cases relating to his Health. When *Mr. Willis* left *Oxford*, he lived for three Years with the famous *William Wotton*, B. D. Rector of *Middleton Keynes*, a Man of universal Learning. In 1702 he revived *Fenny-Stratford* Market. In 1705 he was chosen Member of Parliament for the Town of *Buckingham*, in the room of *Sir Richard Temple*, Bart. who had made his Election for the County of *Bucks*, and during the short Time he was in Parliament, was a constant Attendant, and generally upon Committees. — In 1707 he married *Catherine*, Daughter of *Daniel Elliot*, Esq; of a very ancient Family in *Cornwall*, with whom he had a Fortune of 8000 *l.* and a numerous Issue.† Between the

† Upon the Death of this Lady, *Mr. Willis* erected a Monument in *Bletchley* Church, with the following Inscriptions, *viz.* Here under resteth the Body of *Catherine*,

Years 1704 and 1707 he contributed very largely, even 800*l.* towards the repairing and beautifying *Bletchley* Church, of which he was Patron, and to which Church he gave a Set of exceeding handsome Communion Plate.

— In 1717 the Society of Antiquaries being revived, Mr. *Willis* became a Member of it. — Aug. 23, 1720, the Degree of M. A. was conferred on him, by Diploma, by the University of *Oxford*. At his Solicitation, a Subscription was raised for building the beautiful Chapel of St. *Martin's* at *Fenny-Stratford*, which was begun in 1724, and consecrated by Dr. *Richard Reynolds*, Lord Bishop of *Lincoln*, May 27, 1730. The Cieling of it is decorated with the Arms of all the Benefactors who gave 10*l.* or upwards. — May, 19, 1746, a dreadful Fire having destroyed above 50 Houses at *Stony-Stratford*, Mr. *Willis*, besides the Money he collected among his Friends for the Benefit of the unhappy Sufferers, repaired, at his own Expence, the Tower of St. *Mary Magdalene's* Church there, in Hopes that others might have contributed towards rebuilding of that Church which was then burnt down. He afterwards gave a Lottery Ticket for the Benefit of that Church, which came up a Prize.

A 2

In

Catherine, only Child of *Daniel Elliot*, of *Port Elliot*, in the County of *Cornwall*, Esq; Wife of *Browne Willis*, Esq; Lord of these Manors; by whom she had Issue ten Children; of which four Sons, and four Daughters survive her, viz. *Thomas*, *John*, *Henry*, *Elliot*, *Gertrude*, *Catherine*, *Mary*, *Alice*. Both she and her Husband, were descended from the antient Lords of this and the adjoining Parish of *Whaddon*, when departing this Life at *Whaddon-Hall*, Oct. 2, 1724, in the 38th Year of her Age, she was, according to her Desire, here interred. — Here also lyeth the Body of *Anne*, the Wife of *Thomas Willis*, Esq; who died May 21, 1739, aged 22 Years and 5 Days.

ELLIOT WILLIS, A.M.

Coll. *Trinitatis Oxon.* Scholaris,

Ac *hujus Ecclesiae*, B. M. V. Rector,

Obiit July 24, 1752,

Anno *Ætatis sue* 33.

In 1741 he presented the University of *Oxford* with his fine Cabinet of *English* Coins, at that Time looked upon as the most complete Collection in *England*, and which he had been upwards of Forty Years in collecting: But the University thinking it too much for him, who had then a large Family, to give the Gold ones, purchased them for 150 Guineas, which were paid to Mr. *Willis* for 167 *English* Gold Coins, at the Rate of Four Guineas *per* Ounce weight, and even in this Way, the Gold Coins were a considerable Benefaction. This Cabinet Mr. *Willis* annually visited upon the 19th of *October*, being St. *Frideswide's* Day, and never failed making some Addition to it. He also gave (as I have been informed) some MSS. to the *Bodleian* Library, together with a Picture of his Grandfather, Dr. *Thomas Willis*. — April 10, 1749, the University of *Oxford* created Mr. *Willis* L. L. D. by Diploma. — In 1752 he laid out 200 *l.* towards the Repairs of the fine Tower at *Buckingham* Church; and was, upon every Occasion a great Friend to that Town, which he had once represented in Parliament.

In 1756, *Bow Brickhill* Church, which had been disused near 150 Years, was restored and repaired through his Generosity. In 1757 he erected, in *Christ Church, Oxford*, an handsome Monument for Dr. *Iles*, Canon of that Cathedral, to whom his Grandfather was an Exhibitioner; and in 1759 he prevailed upon University College to do the same in *Bechampton* Church for their great Benefactor Sir *Simon Benet*, Bart. above 100 Years after his Death: Dr. *Willis*, also, at his own Expence, placed a square Marble Stone over him, on Account of his Benefactions at *Bechampton, Buckingham, Stony-Stratford, &c.*

After a useful and well spent Life, this good and worthy Person left the World Feb. 5, 1760. He dyed at *Whad-*
don-

don-Hall, with great Ease, and without the usual Agonies of Death, and was buried in a decent Manner, on *Monday, Feb. 11, 1760*, in *Fenny-Stratford* Chapel. He left particular Directions as to his Funeral, and desired, that no Persons might be invited to it, except the Mayor and Aldermen of *Buckingham*, to each of whom he left his first Volume of *Notitia Parl.* and a small Legacy beside. Mr. *Cole*, Rector of *Bletchley*, Mr. *Francis*, the Minister of *Fenny-Stratford*, and Mr. *John Gibberd*, Curate of *Whaddon*, attended in a Mourning Coach, and near 60 of his Neighbours and Tenants on Horseback. The last Offices were, by particular Desire, performed by Mr. *Gibberd*. The following Inscription (drawn up by Dr. *Willis*) on a white marble Stone, enchased with Black, is directed to be put over him.

Hic situs est

Browne Willis, *Antiquarius*,

Cujus avi cl^{mi}. æternæ memoriæ,

Thomæ Willis, *archiatri totius Europæ celeberrimi*

Defuncti die Sancti Martini, A. D. 1675,

Hæc capella exiguum monumentum est.

Obiit 5^o Die Feb. A. D. 1760,

Ætatis suæ 78.

O Christe, foter et judex,

Huic peccatorum primo,

Misericors et propitius esto.

Dr. *Willis* gave to his eldest Grandson, and Heir, (whom he appointed his sole Executor,) all his Books, Pictures, &c. except *Rymer's Fædera*, in 17 Folio Volumes, which he bequeathed to *Trinity College, Oxford*, and the Choice of one Book to the Rev. Mr. *Francis Wise*; and ordered his Manuscripts to be sent within a Quarter of a Year to the University of *Oxford*.

As

As to his Character, this learned Society, of which he was one of the first Revivers, and one of the most industrious Members, can bear me Witness, that he was indefatigable in his Researches: For his Works were of the most laborious Kind. But what enabled him besides his unwearied Diligence, to bring them to Perfection, was, his being blessed with a most excellent Memory. He had laid so good a Foundation of Learning, that tho' he had chiefly conversed with Records, and other Matters of Antiquity, which are not apt to form a polite Style; yet he expressed himself, in all his Compositions, in an easy and genteel Manner. He was, indeed, one of the first who placed our Ecclesiastical History and Antiquities upon a firm Basis, by grounding them upon Records and Registers; which, in the main, are unexceptionable Authorities. During the Course of his long Life he had visited every Cathedral in *England* and *Wales*, except *Carlisle*: Which Journeys he used to call his Pilgrimages. In his Friendships, none more sincere and hearty: Always communicative, and ever ready to assist every studious and inquisitive Person. This occasioned an Acquaintance and Connexion between him and all his learned Contemporaries. For his Mother, the University of *Oxford*, he always expressed the most awful Respect and the warmest Esteem.

As to his Piety and moral Qualifications: He was strictly religious, without any Mixture of Superstition or Enthusiasm, and quite Exemplary in this Respect. And of this, his many public Works in building, repairing, and beautifying of Churches, are so many standing Evidences. He was charitable to the Poor and Needy; just and upright towards all Men. With Regard to himself, he was remarkably sober and temperate; and often said, that he denied himself many Things, that he might employ them better. And, indeed, he appeared to have had no greater Value for
Money;

Money, than as it furnished him with opportunities of doing Good. In a Word, no one ever deserved better of the Society of Antiquaries ; if Industry and an incessant Application, throughout a long Life, to the investigating the Antiquities of this national Church and State is deserving of their Countenance.

I shall conclude with the following List of Dr. *Willis's* Works, set down according to the order of Time in which they were published.

In 1712, Mr. *Willis* published *Queries for the History and Survey of the County of Buckingham*, in one Sheet in Folio.

In 1715, When Mr. *Gale* published his History and Antiquities of *Winchester Cathedral*, Mr. *Willis* supplied him with the History of *Hyde Abbey*, and Lists of the Abbots of *Newminster* and of *Hyde*, therein published.

In 1715, and 1716. He published his *Notitia Parliamentaria*, or an History of the Counties, Cities, and Boroughs in *England and Wales*, 2 Vols. 8vo. to which he added a Third in 1750. The first Volume was reprinted in 1730, with Additions.

1717. In the Antiquities of the Cathedral Church of *Worcester*, written by *Thomas Abingdon*, Esq; (and published 8vo. *London*, 1717,) at Page 116 is a List of the Priors of *Worcester*, by *Browne Willis*, Esq;

1717. A Survey of the Cathedral Church of *St. David's*, and the Edifices belonging to it, as they stood in the Year 1715. 8vo. *Cuts*.

1718 and 1719. An History of the Mitred parliamentary Abbies and conventual Cathedral Churches, 2 Vols. 8vo.

1719. A Survey of the Cathedral Church of *Landaff*. 8vo. *Cuts*.

1720. A Survey of the Cathedral Church of *St. Asaph's*, and the Edifices belonging to it. 8vo. *Cuts*.

1721.

1721. A Survey of the Cathedral Church of *Bangor*.
8vo. *Cuts*.

1727, 1730, 1733. Survey of the Cathedrals of *England*, with *Parochiale Anglicanum*, illustrated with Draughts of the Cathedrals. 3 Vols. 4to.

1743. At the End of Bishop *Tanner's Notitia Monastica* in Folio, 1744, are a Series of Principals of religious Houses, sent by Mr. *Willis* to Mr. *John Tanner*, Editor of that Work.

1750. Address to the Patrons of ecclesiastical Livings, without Name or Date, in one Sheet 4to.

1754. He published a new Edition of *Ecton's Thesaurus Rerum Ecclesiasticarum*. 4to.

1755. His last Publication was the History and Antiquities of the Town, Hundred, and Deanry of *Buckingham, London*, 4to.

Read before the Society of Antiquaries of London,
May 22, and June 12, 1760.

